

Lebanon VAMC

N E W S L E T T E R



Winter 2016/2017 Edition



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NAME THIS Newsletter

Our newsletter goes out to our Veterans, employees and friends several times a year but needs a fitting name! "Keystone Chronicle" and "Linkage" have been names used in the past, but it is time for something new! We'd love to find something that honors our location and heritage! Please submit your idea for naming this publication to VHALEBPublicAffairs@va.gov by March 31, 2017. The winning entry will be chosen by a panel and receive a special prize from our Canteen!



VA

**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health
Administration
Lebanon VA
Medical Center



Chet Lubecki, orientation mobility specialist, works with a Veteran on safely navigating steps using a support cane at Lebanon VAMC. The VISOR program provides this training as part of their orientation mobility component of their overall vision rehabilitation program.

Nine days to a more independent Veteran

MATT JONES
Public Affairs Specialist

Lebanon VA Medical Center's VISOR program, or Visually Impaired Services Outpatient Rehabilitation, is helping Veterans regain their independence.

The centerpiece of VISOR is the nine-day residential training program that builds the skills one needs to conduct everyday activities with dramatically reduced visual capabilities. During the program, the visually impaired Veterans receive skill training in visual skills, orientation and mobility, living skills, computer access technology, and adjustment counseling. Veterans participating in the program stay overnight in a hotel setting while receiving care at the medical center.

According to Lebanon VAMC VISOR Program Manager Maria Grimes, any Veteran with severe visual impairment may be eligible for the program. Typically, many visually impaired Veterans have difficulty



Bill Althouse, low vision therapist, trains a Veteran on using a portable video magnifier at Lebanon VAMC. This portable device allows individuals to read print by magnifying and improving contrast and is one of the tools the VISOR programs trains Veterans on using.

reading fine print, cooking or managing their home and are at increased risk for falls. Training is geared towards reducing the limitations that the vision loss imposes. Most Veterans are referred through their Primary Care or eye care provider, but may also contact the VISOR Program directly to request an evaluation or services.

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From the desk of the acting director...

Fellow Veterans, Co-Workers, Friends, Family and Stakeholders,

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I hope this letter finds you having safely enjoyed the holiday season with those whom you love and embarking on the new year with hope and optimism. We appreciate your many expressions of affection and support for the Veterans we are honored to serve and the selfless employees who ensure America keeps faith with its noble guardians. Your kindness and thoughtfulness remind America's Veterans and our employees that their service is respected and appreciated not only on Veterans Day and Memorial Day, but every day of the year. I hope you will take some measure of satisfaction in the certainty that you are making a difference in the lives of these proud Americans.

I am pleased to share this newsletter with you. It is a part of our effort to be transparent and to provide you helpful information about current events in the Veterans Health Administration, insights into your VA – the Lebanon VA Medical Center and options for your health care. We intend to publish this newsletter quarterly and make it available to every Veteran, family member, stakeholder, employee, volunteer, elected official and anyone else who is interested in Veterans' issues. You can view the newsletter any time at <http://www.lebanon.va.gov/news/>. You can also grab a copy in any of our waiting rooms.

Once again, thank you for caring so deeply about South Central Pennsylvania's Veterans. We are grateful for our many community partners who make Veterans the focus of their work, as well as those who support our employees so faithfully. We could not ask more of you and I hope that you know we will always give our best to America's Veterans, our employees and our community.

I am, Respectfully Yours,

Margaret G. Wilson, MSN, RN
Acting Director



LEBANON VA MEDICAL CENTER LEADERSHIP TEAM:

Margaret G. Wilson, MSN, RN
Acting Director

Linda S. Umberger
Executive Assistant to the Director

Cindy Shiner
Acting Associate Director

Judy K. Eisenhauer
Acting Associate Director
for Patient Care Services

Anthony J. Slavinski, MD
Chief of Staff

Laine Hellein
Director of Quality Management

Veterans Who Need Routine Audiology Appointments Now Able to Schedule Directly

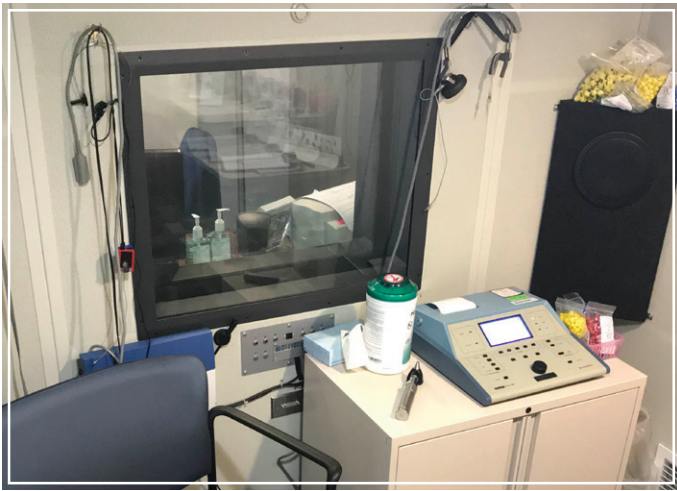
Initiative Gets Veterans Into Hearing Appointments Quicker, Optometry follows suit

TED NICHOLS II

Public Affairs Specialist

Veterans receiving care at Lebanon VA Medical Center are now able to directly schedule routine hearing appointments through the audiology clinic without a primary care referral – a move that eliminates multiple steps and gets Veterans into appointments quicker.

“This is a win-win for Veterans receiving audiology care through our medical center who will now be able to pick up the phone and directly schedule an audiology appointment and for the primary care providers who will now have more time to concentrate on care



A typical audiology exam booth at Lebanon VAMC

rather than generating audiology referrals,” said Dr. Teresa Wallace, audiology and speech pathology chief at LVAMC. “It is timely this initiative gets rolled out at Lebanon during Audiology Awareness Month. We look forward to continuing to provide world-class care through our Audiology Clinic that has ordered and fit over 5,000 hearing instruments since the end of 2015 and is staffed with nine excellent doctors of audiology.”

Lebanon VA’s Audiology Clinic, like others across VA, order and fit only the most current, top-tier hearing instrument technology available from seven major hearing aid manufacturers. Eligible Veterans can now access direct care in the Audiology Clinic by calling (717) 272-6621 or 1-800-409-8771 and dialing extension 4582 or extension 4634. Veterans unsure about their VA health care eligibility can contact enrollment at extension 6000.

Before now, Veterans seeking appointments with audiologists had to first make an appointment with a primary care physician for a referral for a routine clinic consult visit. A clinic representative would contact the patient to set up the consult appointment, which could result in a several weeks’-long lag between the appointment and when the Veteran was actually seen. The new audiology process is part of the VA’s Audiology and Optometry Direct Scheduling Initiative, which began as a successful pilot at three sites in 2015 and is being expanded to all VA Medical Centers.

“The Audiology and Optometry Direct Scheduling Initiative allows Veterans who need eye and ear care to be seen sooner,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “It also has the benefit of freeing up primary care physicians so access to primary care improves for other Veterans as well. This kind of process improvement is exactly the type of innovation we expected when we launched MyVA in 2014. In the end, we changed a VA process by considering the needs of our Veterans, a change that allows for more timely care and an improved Veteran experience.”

The Audiology and Optometry Direct Scheduling Initiative is one of a number of efforts underway at VA to improve Veterans’ access to care and wait times. Among those recent accomplishments:

- VA and Choice contractors created more than 3.1 million authorizations for Veterans to receive care in the private sector from May 1, 2015, through April 30, 2016. This represents an eight percent increase in authorizations when compared to the same period in 2014/2015.
- In FY 2015, 12 percent of all Veterans enrolled for VA care received telehealth-based care. This includes more than 2 million telehealth visits touching 677,000 Veterans; 45 percent of these Veterans live in rural areas.
- In FY 2015, more than 6,300 Veterans accessed VA care through live interactive video telehealth from home.
- VA has activated over 3.9 million square feet of space in the past two years.
- We’ve increased authorizations for care in the community 46 percent in the past two years.
- Clinic production is up 10 percent as measured by the same productivity standard used by many private-sector healthcare systems. This increase translates into roughly 20 million additional hours of care for Veterans.
- As we improve access to care, more and more Veterans are choosing VA care — for the quality, for the convenience, or for the cost-savings, so even though we’re completing millions more appointments, we continue to have more work to do.
- VA has increased salaries for physicians and dentists to close the pay gap with the private sector and to make VA an employer of choice. With more competitive salaries, VA will be better positioned to retain and hire more health care providers to care for Veterans.

“We want our Veterans and those who care for them to know that we are doing everything that we can to improve their experience with VA and to provide the care our Veterans deserve in a thoughtful and timely way,” said VA Under Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. “We have made progress, but know there is more work to be done. This Audiology and Optometry Direct Scheduling Initiative is one of many initiatives underway to improve Veterans access to care.”

The Audiology and Optometry Direct Scheduling Initiative is expected to be fully operational within all VA Medical Centers nationwide by the end of 2016.

The Lebanon VA Medical Center is one of 168 medical centers in the nation with the sole purpose of providing world-class medical care to America’s Veterans. If you are a Veteran, you may be eligible to receive care and benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. To learn more, call 717-228-6000.

For more information about the Lebanon VA Medical Center, visit www.lebanon.va.gov, like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/VALebanon, or follow us on Twitter as www.twitter.com/VALebanon.



Dr. Adam Albert (center) serves as a hospitalist at the Lebanon VAMC and was recently awarded the 2016 Medicine Clerkship Teacher of the Year Award for Affiliate Faculty in the Medicine Category from the Penn State College of Medicine.

MEDICAL UPDATE

Hospitalists keystone of care and teaching at Lebanon VAMC

ADAM J. ALBERT, M.D.
Lebanon VAMC Hospitalist

At Lebanon VA Medical Center, the inpatient medical and surgical units are staffed by Internal Medicine specialists known as Hospitalists. These doctors are on site 24 hours per day, 365 days per year to provide inpatient care to Veterans in the intensive care, medical-surgical, and rehabilitation unit. In addition, we provide coverage to psychiatry, hospice, and the community living centers.

Hospitalists are focused on the care of acute medical problems such as heart problems, respiratory illness, stroke, and liver disease, just to name a few. In addition, they are trained to help diagnose problems that require complex testing. At Lebanon VA Medical Center, our Hospitalists work together with nurses, surgeons, radiologists, pharmacists, respiratory therapists and cancer specialists to help diagnose and treat complex diseases.

Our Hospitalist doctors studied for four years in a college or university, four years in medical school, and completed three years of graduate medical training in a hospital to specialize in Internal Medicine. They are all certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine or The American Osteopathic Board of Internal Medicine.

Lebanon VA Medical Center is fortunate to have an educational affiliation with the Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine and the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. In addition to providing care to Veterans, our Hospitalists provide supervision and training of both medical students (students studying to become a doctor) and residents (doctors who graduated medical school doing specialty training). Nationally, VA has had a partnership with academic hospitals since the end of World War II. In 2014, VA Medical Centers nationally have trained over 41,000 medical residents, 22,000

medical students and 300 Advanced Fellows (sub-specialists such as cardiologists or cancer specialists). The Hospitalists at the Lebanon VA Medical Center are grateful to have the opportunity to prepare U.S. doctors for careers in medicine. Many of our current Hospital doctors received training at the Lebanon VA Medical Center prior to becoming employed here.

Our Hospitalists all have an appointment through the Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine as Clinical Assistant Professors of Medicine. Many of our Hospitalists have been recognized by the College of Medicine and Residency Programs for outstanding teaching. It is our hope that the collaboration between Lebanon VA Medical Center and The Milton S. Hershey Medical Center-Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine will continue to provide our Veterans with the highest quality and of medical care available.

FACILITIES & ENGINEERING UPDATE

Facility updates fuel excellence in care

THADDEUS S. KOCUBA
Facility Manager

It has been another banner year for engineering service with multiple construction projects and improvements through the facility, and at our VA Clinics. Recently, we opened a new radiology section of the emergency department, which includes a CAT scan, and an X-ray machine. This will improve timeliness and flow in the emergency department for those who need a radiology scan as part of their emergency visit. Lebanon also re-opened Building 23, which received a new ventilation system, new lighting, flooring and paint. The building is primarily administrative, but also houses the wheelchair repair shop.

You may have noticed the ongoing work for the new entrance to Building 1 and the Surgical Building. This new entrance will be the facilities "South Entrance". It features a covered drop off area, a reception area, wheelchair storage, and connections to both Building 1 and the Surgical Center, Building 104. Traveling to the front of Building 1, you will find the massive rock excavation that has prepared Building 1 for the new Laboratory. The new Laboratory will feature expanded testing services, and a fully automated testing line. The expected completion of the laboratory is the end of 2017.

Next to the lab, you will see two projects, Phase 2 of the Radiology Addition, and an expansion of the retail store. Phase 2 of Radiology will relocate many of the X-Ray machines from the current area to the new ground floor location, next to the new Radiology entrance. The retail addition will provide approximately 1,000 more square feet to the Patriot Store.

In Building 1, on the second floor, Phase 1 of the Oncology project is nearing completion. Phase 1 constructed the Chemo treatment



wing of Oncology. Phase 2 will construct the exam wing where the bed unit on the second floor is located. Before Phase 2 of Oncology can start, the Bed unit move to the opposite side of the building is to be completed. The complete phase 1 is to be the infusion clinic on a temporary basis. The infusion clinic is currently in Building 104.

In the community, an addition to the Reading VA Clinic has completed its construction phase. Equipment and furniture is currently installing in the new 4,600 square foot addition. The new addition will feature a Physical Therapy Clinic, Telehealth Clinic, and additional exam rooms. In the Camp Hill area, VA is close to signing a lease for the new location of the Camp Hill VA Clinic.

Lebanon VA Medical Center and its Community Clinics have changed a lot in recent years, and we are confident this will improve your experience at your VA Medical Center, and allow the doctors and nurses to provide the best care anywhere!



Infusion wing of Oncology

VOLUNTARY SERVICE UPDATE

Robust community support key to mission



Lebanon Voluntary Service left to right: Dietrich Schaeffer, Jeremy Fees, Jolyn Swift and Christopher Levengood

2016 HAS BEEN ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE.

JEREMY K. FEES
Voluntary Service, Chief

We have seen a departmental reorganization, a new Chief of Service, and welcomed Recreational Therapy into the department. Through all of this, Voluntary Service has not skipped a beat. There were over 42,000 hours volunteered by the generous people in and around the Lebanon community. Our volunteers perform tasks throughout the facility including lab specimen delivery, driving patients to appointments, greeting Veterans and directing them to appointments, administrative support, companionship, and many others. Through donations, voluntary service continues to provide a wide variety of recreational trips and activities. In 2016, voluntary service took Veterans on fishing trips, bowling, to picnics, movies, social clubs, bingo parties and many others. Additionally, through donations, voluntary service is able to provide support for programs and departments throughout the hospital. We continue to support transportation needs for indigent Veterans so they get the care they need, hotel accommodations for Veterans and family members in need, recreational and creative arts activities and many more.

Voluntary Service has the honor of hosting several events throughout the year. These events include the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans, Volunteer Recognition Ceremony, POW MIA recognition, Veterans Day recognition. All of these events honor the brave men and women who served our country or who are serving those who serve.

Miss Pennsylvania enjoys lunch with a group of Veterans during National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans.



THE VETERANS ACTIVITY CENTER is operated by Recreation Therapy and provides a great resource to Veterans visiting our facility. The center is located in Building 18 on the first floor and provides recreational and social opportunities for all Veterans who utilize the medical center. A Veteran is welcome to visit the Activity Center and enjoy light refreshments and fellowship between clinic appointments. Programs offered assist Veterans with leisure and social functioning to focus on improving or maintaining overall independence within their community. A variety of programs are offered including creative arts and crafts, life skills group, volunteer sponsored groups/meals, pet visitations, music appreciation, community trips sponsored by voluntary service organizations, a free library, and many more. Additional information regarding the center can be directed to Ida Carvell, Recreation Therapist, (717) 272-6621 ext. 4555. The Veterans Activity Center is open Monday – Friday from 8 a.m.- noon and 1-3 p.m.

VOLUNTARY SERVICE UPDATE *(continued)*

A new program for 2016 is the start of **COOKING CLASSES** geared towards helping Veterans learn both life and vocational skills. Shown below is the state-of-the-art facility.



Sergeant Larry Carter and Sergeant David Donmoyer set the POW-MIA table at the 2016 POW-MIA Recognition Ceremony.

VISOR Program

(continued from page 1)

One Veteran, Army Veteran Lewis Swann of Miletus, W.V., said the independence he has regained through the program is phenomenal.

"My family tried to baby me," Swann said. For example, he said, if he dropped something at the dinner table, they would scramble to pick it up for him. "Now I know to touch the table first before bending over to maintain my bearing and find it very easily." Little things like this are a big deal Swann said.

Coast Guard Veteran Bruce Dreher of Shamokin shared a more drastic example of change. He had gone more than a year without using a computer before he started the program. Through VISOR, he will receive a computer with special software that allows him to navigate using sound, enlarged fonts and high-contrast imagery. He received one-on-one training on the computer programs during his stay, and with practice, will be able to do nearly anything he was able to do before, he said.

"Anyone who comes here won't regret it," Dreher said.

A big reason for the program's popularity among Veterans is the staff, which they describe as attentive, caring and dedicated.

"They are like soldiers on the battlefield," Swann said. "They go above and beyond the call of duty."

The other reason is that many Veterans leave not only with new knowledge and skills, but also with prosthetic devices that immediately improve one's quality of life. These devices include talking watches and calculators, sophisticated handheld magnification devices, CCTV reading machines and computers, at no cost to eligible Veterans.

All of this is tailored to the Veteran. Family members can even participate in the training if it is determined the Veteran would benefit from them doing so.

"Vision loss isn't something that happens only to the Veteran," Grimes said. "It also happens to the spouse and the family as well."

"I love to mow the grass, but after I was done, my wife would have to come back and do what I missed," Swann said. "Now she doesn't need to follow me."

In addition to the nine-day residential program, services are also available in the traditional outpatient setting at Lebanon VAMC and many of VA Clinics. Limited services are also available in the home.

Are you or do you know a Veteran who may be eligible for the VISOR program? Veterans can be referred to the VISOR Program by any VA health or eye care provider or can contact the VISOR Program directly at 717-272-6621 extension 4542 or extension 4940.



Recreation Therapy

continues to provide world class service to our Veterans through goal oriented therapeutic activities. Several new programs were introduced in 2016 including equine therapy and dog walking and nature activities.

In October, several residents of the Residential Recovery Center, in partnership with the Lebanon Humane Society, volunteered to participate in the Tails on Trails Event where Veterans walked shelter dogs and



manned water booths. It was a resounding success with at least three adoptions as a result of our residents.

COMMON QUESTIONS & VA HEALTHCARE ELIGIBILITY INFO

lebanon.va.gov

SOCIAL
MEDIA



/VALebanon



@VALebanon

Am I a Veteran?

8 YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED how many times we are asked this question. Folks seem to have all sorts of preconceptions about what makes someone a Veteran. Fortunately, however, the answer is quite simple. If you served in the active Armed Forces of the United States, then you are a Veteran! Pure and simple. It's not necessary to have served overseas or during a time of war. National Guard members and Reservists who have been called to active Federal service are also Veterans. Age, income, race, gender, religion, creed or marital status do not matter—the only thing which does, is that you wore the uniform of an American defender. Thank you for your service!

Returning Veterans

If you are a recently discharged Veteran with service in a theater of combat operations (OIR/ORS – Operation Inherent Resolve/ Operation Resolute Support), VA can provide you with free care for 5 years from your discharge from active duty for conditions possibly related to your service, regardless of your income status.

For more information call,
717-272-6621 x 4565.

**CALL 1-717-228-6000 OR 1-800-409-8771,
EXT. 6000, TO SPEAK TO ONE OF OUR
ENROLLMENT SPECIALISTS!**

Am I Eligible for Care?

ALL VETERANS ARE ELIGIBLE to apply for VA care. Our enrollment specialists review your military service record to determine your benefit eligibility. The results are sent to you in writing. You will be assigned to a priority group based on your specific eligibility status, income, and service information you provided on the 10-10EZ form. Your enrollment information is reviewed each year or whenever you have a life change. Your ability to remain enrolled in VA may depend on the funding that VA receives from Congress to provide your care. You will be notified in writing if VA cannot renew your enrollment for another year. You should contact our enrollment specialists any time you have a major life change such as retirement, loss of income or housing, change in marital status or a disability condition.

Veterans enrolled in VA Healthcare meet the minimum required standards of the Affordable Healthcare Act.

Combat Veterans

Veterans, including activated Reservists and members of the National Guard, are eligible if they served on active duty in a theatre of combat operations after November 11, 1998, and have NOT been discharged under dishonorable conditions.

Documentation used to determine service in a theater of combat operations can include any of the following:

- ✧ Military service documentation that reflects service in a combat theatre, or
- ✧ Receipt of combat service medals, or
- ✧ Receipt of imminent danger or hostile fire pay or tax benefits.



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The Best Care Anywhere...The Best Employees Anywhere

Lebanon VA Medical Center

1700 South Lincoln Avenue
Lebanon, Pennsylvania 17042

717-272-6621 • 1-800-409-8771

www.lebanon.va.gov